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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the status of collaboration and cooperation in the Canadian automotive industry, specifically between the Canadian Association of Motive Power Educators (CAMPE) and the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service (CARS) Council. Together, these two organizations aim to address many of the core labor market issues that have plagued Canada's "after-sales" service and repair industries for years. After 12 years, CAMPE and CARS have made considerable progress in their efforts to bridge the gap between the automotive industry and Canada's network of community colleges. This report outlines the progress made to date and identifies the six major lessons that have been learned in order to enable other groups to benefit from the CAMPE-CARS experience. The industry is identified as the employers, employees, and others involved in after-sales service and repair of light cars and trucks. In 1998, the sector employed a total of 200,544 Canadians at 27,150 facilities. Cars and light trucks have become more technologically advanced, the number of cars in Canada has grown faster than the population in recent years, a net exodus of skilled technicians is expected as baby-boomers retire, and training and skills gaps have been identified--all of which indicate the need for continued development and implementation of educational programs. (NB)

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HOW CAN 29 COLLEGES/ INSTITUTES/SCHOOL BOARDS COLLABORATE NATIONALLY?

Lessons Learned from CAMPE - CARS Collaboration in the Automotive Sector

Prepared for the ACCC/TASC/CAETO Colleges/Institutes and Sector Councils Symposium
February 22-23, 2001
Ottawa, Ontario

By **The Canadian Association of Motive Power Educators (CAMPE)**
The Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council (CARS)
LMG The Labour Market Group Inc.

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1.0 Introduction

Since Henry Ford started mass-producing automobiles almost ninety years ago, the automobile has become an important part of the fabric of our lives. Ford's belief - that collaboration and cooperation could transform the automobile industry – was, and continues to be correct.

Collaboration has become a tenet in the Canadian automotive industry. Specifically, collaboration between the Canadian Association of Motive Power Educators (CAMPE) and the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service (CARS) Council has helped these organizations to help address many of the core labour market issues that have plagued Canada's "after-sales" service and repair industry for years.

After 12 years, CAMPE and CARS have made considerable progress in their efforts to bridge gaps between the automotive industry and Canada's network of community colleges. There have been skirmishes and battles, but more importantly, there has been considerable success in ensuring that the training system meets the needs of the industry.

Yet much work remains to be done. While the labour market challenges have evolved, political changes have necessitated many new initiatives. Yet CAMPE and CARS continue to collaborate.

Several important lessons have emerged from the CAMPE-CARS experience. **This report outlines the progress made to date and identifies the six major lessons that have been learned in order to enable other groups to benefit from the CAMPE-CARS experience.**

2.0 A Profile of Canada's Automotive Repair Sector

The Canadian automotive repair and service industry is a large and integral component of Canada's automotive industry. The industry has been identified as the employers, employees and others involved in after-sales service and repair of light cars and trucks[1].

Specifically, the sector includes the following occupations:

- Automotive Service Technicians – Generalist
- Automotive Service Technicians – Specialized
- Apprentice Technicians
- Installers
- Lube and Oil Persons
- Service Advisors
- Service Managers & Assistant Service Managers

This group is impressive both in terms of their numbers, and their contribution to the automotive industry. As shown in Table 1 and 2, the sector employs roughly 200,000 Canadians at 27,150 facilities.

Table 1

Number of Employees by Key Occupation / Functional Areas – 1998	#	%
Technician – Generalist	79,415	39.6
Service / Asst. Service/ Parts/ Body Shop Manager	22,060	11
Technician – Electronic Specialist	14,239	7.1
Owner / Operator	13,838	6.9
Apprentice – Automotive & Collision	12,835	6.4
Medium Heavy Duty Truck Technician	11,632	5.8
Technician – Other Specialists	11,431	5.7
Instructor / Trainer	10,227	5.1
Collision Repair Technician / Refinisher	9,024	4.5
Other	6,418	3.2
Parts Counterperson	4,211	2.1
Service Advisor / Estimator	3,409	1.7
Shop Foreman	1,805	0.9
Total Employment	**200,544**	**100%**

Source: Bridging the Gaps: Issues and Challenges Facing the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Industry, Page 9

[1] CARS, Bridging the Gaps: Issues and Challenges Facing the Automotive Repair and Service Industry. 1999. Page 6

Table 2

Number of Employees – Employed by Key Employee Type	# of employees	# of facilities
Franchised Car Dealers	83,028	3,700
Independent Repair Facilities	50,400	10,500
Specialty Services – Tires	22,100	850
Service Stations	14,250	2,500
Specialty Services – Lube	9,750	650
Collision / Glass Repair	7,350	7,000
Canadian Tire Stores	5,345	430
Specialty Services – Undercar	4,905	750
Department Stores / Warehouse Clubs	1,376	270
Specialty Services – Transmission	1,080	300
Specialty Services – Radiator	960	200
Total Employees	**200,544**	**27,150**

Source: Bridging the Gaps: Issues and Challenges Facing the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Industry, Pages 8 & 9

With a workforce of more than 200,000, they are an impressive in terms of their numbers. We also note according to that this sector is approximately 40 percent of the size of Canada's coveted automotive (manufacturing) sector[2].

2.1 About CAMPE and CARS

In the late 1980's, the federal government adopted a new sector-based approach to assess and address the core labour issues affecting Canadian industries. Comprehensive sector studies identified the key issues and challenges, and enabled the stakeholder groups to determine their willingness to tackle these challenges. Where full collaboration was possible, an independent sector council – made up of business, education, labour and other key stakeholder groups - is established to develop and coordinate the implementation of strategies and measures that could enable these councils to address the labour issues facing the sector. To date, more than twenty sector councils have been established in Canada.

[2] According to Industry Canada's 1998 Automotive Competitiveness Review, the Canadian automotive industry accounts for more than 500,000 jobs and 16 percent of North America's light-duty vehicle production. Please see http://strategis.ic.ca/autoe

One of the first sector councils established was the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service (CARS) Council. One of the stakeholders in the automotive repair and service sector was the Canadian Transportation Institute (CTI). The CTI was disbanded in the late 1980's and the Canadian Association of Motive Power Educators (CAMPE) emerged in its place. These two groups have established a strategic alliance and working relationship that has enabled the two organizations to develop and implement measures that have, and continue to benefit the sector.

The CAMPE is an association for educators in motive power programs - such as automotive and light truck, heavy truck, railway, aviation maintenance - that provides opportunities for its members to maintain the integrity of their programs, foster the professional development of faculty, and develop and share resources and knowledge among its 29 institutional members.

CARS is a national not-for-profit association established in 1988 to serve the human resource needs of the Canadian car and truck service repair industry. The CARS is composed of:

- The CARS Council - a federation of seven national associations that addresses the human resource and training needs of the Canadian car and truck repair and service industry.
- The CARS Institute - a national professional membership organization for individuals working within the car and truck repair and service industry.
- The CARS Network - the CARS Council (representing management) and the CARS Institute (representing employees) working together to establish a national network of qualified trainers, training centers and institutions for the delivery of repair and service training from coast to coast.

The establishment of CARS and CAMPE has provided a forum for the stakeholders in the automotive repair industry to address their core labour market issues. This has enabled the development of a strong communications link that has benefited the private sector, the colleges and other stakeholder groups.

In regards to education and training, the strategic alliance between CAMPE and CARS has enabled educators to obtain a national perspective on industry training needs. Previously, training needs were identified at the provincial and/or regional level. This communication has had a significant impact upon the provincial curricula.

2.2 The Labour Market Challenges Facing the Automotive Repair Sector

The Canadian automotive repair and service industry has, and continues to face a number of important and related labour market challenges that could, if left unchecked, cripple the industry and render it unable to meet the needs of Canadians. These issues, and their connection, are outlined below.

Cars and light body trucks have come more technologically advanced over the past thirty years. It is generally accepted that new cars have as many technological components as was contained in Apollo 13. Vehicles are continuing to become more technologically advanced.

- *This has effectively changed both the level and mix of skills required by automotive technicians;*
- *Automotive technicians must now have strong set of technical skills – including a thorough understanding of electronics, diagnostics and emissions – along with good soft (or enabling) skills;*
- *Students require stronger academic backgrounds in order to diagnose and repair increasingly complex automotive systems;*
- *Lifelong learning is now necessary in the industry;*
- *Academic curricula must be revised regularly to provide students with the skills that they need to diagnose and repair problems with vehicles.*

Numerous studies have shown that the total number of vehicles have increased over the past 30 years. In fact, the 1988 labour market study reported that the number of vehicles has grown faster than the population of Canada[3].

- *An increasing number and types of vehicles are being designed and manufactured for the domestic market;*
- *This increases the need for technical knowledge about a growing number of vehicles;*
- *This increases the demand for both technicians and teachers who can help increase the skill level of the pool of technicians;*

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[3] Canada. Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Industry: A Human Resource Study. 1988. Page 40

A review of the age structure of the automotive repair and service workforce[4] points to a net exodus of skilled technicians as baby-boomers retire over the next 10 years.

- *The demand for better-qualified students that are able to handle the rigors of the training, and the rejection of non-qualified students has meant that the colleges have not been operating at full capacity;*
- *A potential shortage of automotive technicians looms;*
- *Most of the college instructors fall into the same age cohort as the automotive technicians working in the private sector- many are likely to retire within the next 10 years;*
- *A potential shortage of college instructors may also be looming*

Training and skill gaps have been identified by industry representatives.

- *The increasing complexity of the vehicles and the diagnostic testing has increased mandatory skill levels across the industry;*
- *The 1999 sector study indicated several skill gaps in the sector;*
- *These instructors may be poised to retire, thereby potentially weakening the college training infrastructure;*

The automotive industry is finding it difficult to escape the outdated stereotypes of automotive technicians. Auto service and repair no longer involves the traditional "grease monkey". Evolving motive technologies requires bright people capable of employing high levels of reasoning to properly diagnose and repair model automobiles.

- *Higher skill levels, and mandatory lifelong learning are required for successful completion of the training and apprenticeships;*
- *This reality has not worked its way through the secondary school system;*
- *Qualified candidates are being lured by opportunities in other occupations;*
- *Fewer qualified candidates are being drawn to the industry.*

[4] CARS, Bridging the Gaps: Issues and Challenges Facing the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Industry. 1999. Page 10.

Some of the Labour Market Solutions Developed and Implemented by CARS and CAMPE

To differing degrees, CAMPE and CARS collaborated in developing and implementing measures to help address the labour market solutions facing the sector. These solutions include:

- **National Accreditation of Post-Secondary Training Programs** that ensures that automotive service and repair training and education programs meet nationally-recognized post-secondary standards. This ensures that students meet industry standards in their education and skills upgrading.
- **Industry Awareness Programs** that are designed to promote automotive education as a viable alternative to high school students.
- **Interactive Distance Learning** that delivers a wide range of technical and management oriented training through satellite connections enabling learning to take place at their places of work.
- A **Mentor Coach Program** that provides service technicians with the skills they need to share their knowledge more effectively with apprentices in the workplace.
- **The CARS has worked with CAMPE members to improve access to much-needed financial and training resources required by colleges.** This has included specialized training programs, vehicles, simulators, and assorted other training aids, thereby increasing the resources available to the college programs.

The link between the labour market issues and the measures developed to address them is illustrated below.

Labour Market Issues	Measures
Recruitment and Retention of Workers	Youth Internship Career Awareness
Skill Gaps	Interactive Distance Learning, Mentor Coach Accreditation
Industry Image	Career Awareness

1 +1 + 3: Benefits that have resulted from CAMPE-CARS Collaboration

The CAMPE-CARS collaboration has yielded a very impressive list of achievements. A partial list includes:

- An avenue for the reasonably smooth flow of information between the automotive repair and service industry and the colleges;
- An opportunity to develop national training standards that enable labour mobility;
- A comprehensive policy and program development mechanism that has and continues to focus on meeting the needs of the industry;
- An opportunity for develop training modules that
- A national program delivery system;
- Opportunities for the colleges to generate much-needed revenues;
- Opportunities for the colleges to receive training aids and materiel;
- Opportunities for the industry to arrive at a labour market equilibrium;
- Opportunities for the industry to arrive at its equity goals and to improve the popular perception of the workforce.

3.0 Lessons Learned

The CARS-CAMPE collaboration has been effective in enabling both the industry and the education sectors to help overcome many of the challenges facing the automotive sector. The most important of these has been the establishment of an information conduit enabling the automobile industry and the education sector to work together to develop and implement feasible solutions to the technical and labour market challenges that have been obstructing the smooth operation of the sector.

In the course of dealing with these challenges, a number of important lessons were learned that could be helpful for other sectors that are considering collaborative ventures.

Lesson 1: Collaboration Can Work

Let's begin with the obvious: **Collaboration - be it a strategic alliance, partnership etc. - can be of tremendous benefit to an industry.** The strategic alliance between CAMPE and CARS has yielded many important benefits to the automotive repair industry. The alliance has also benefited both partner organizations by increasing their access to resources and increasing their ability to deliver programs. To illustrate the potential, we note that this strategic alliance has enabled colleges that are not members of CAMPE to receive increased resources and training aids that they need to do their work.

Lesson 2: Identify Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations

Someone wise once said that failing to plan is planning to fail.

The groups involved in an inter-organizational strategic alliance should establish and articulate clear guidelines, expectations and priorities. This could enable the partner-organizations to identify and focus on the key challenges that they wish to tackle together. The emphasis should be placed on developing a shared vision, plans and activities that benefit the industry as a whole.

Two points are implicit in this lesson. First, the guidelines and priorities should be established jointly. In order to enable synergy to develop and emerge, both parties must be able to contribute; no one group should be able to dictate the terms of the agreement. Second, all of the groups should focus on the "big picture"; myopic perspectives only limit the progress that can be made.

There has not always been real and or perceived parity in the CAMPE-CARS relationship and this has led to frequent strains.

Lesson 3: Establish and Maintain Strong and Effective Channels of Communication

In the game of golf, a swing with a proper follow-through, can make the difference between a shot that lands on the green and a slice that forces you to spend ten minutes looking for a lost ball. The same is true of partnerships: good follow-through will enable the partners to remain focused on the tasks at hand, and will reduce most potential problems. **Groups are encouraged to maintain a steady flow of meaningful information and communication between the partner-organizations.**

Both CARS and CAMPE discovered this relatively early in their histories. The result was the realization that both formal and informal channels of communication are necessary to maintain proper flow of information. A CAMPE representative now sits on the Executive Board of CARS[5], and a CARS representative attends all CAMPE meetings. Other steps that were undertaken include notification and discussion of planned activities that could affect the interests of both associations.

This has enables the relatively free flow of information between and among members of two of the key organizations that represent the automotive repair sector.

Lesson 4: Smile through gritted teeth if you must – but only if it advances the cause.

The old ditty that "Fences make good neighbors" is only marginally true in partnerships because "fences" can be moved. **All partners should be prepared to deal with possible infringements into their traditional domain. If this does happen, you must discuss these problems frankly and openly.** Always consider the benefits that accrue to the industry from a course of action and not simply the problem that it presents to your organization.

This does not mean that partners are given a right to trample on each other. There must be mutual benefit and gain from any partnership. However, this must also be tempered with mutual respect.

[5] The CAMPE seat on the CARS Board was originally assigned to the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC). We note that the ACCC is actively involved in the sector studies, establishing sector councils and helping to establish and providing some non-financial support for groups such as CAMPE.

Groups that have entered or are considering a partnership - versus a strategic alliance - must accept the independence of their partner-organizations. **Partnership does not mean ownership.** As organizations are being forced to become entrepreneurial, they may move into new lines of business to generate revenues. These activities could involve real or perceived threats to the jurisdiction of their partners.

For example, there has been considerable discussion about the CARS' decision to operate an Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) system that enables technicians and other staff to receive independent learning and skills upgrading. This initiative brought CARS into the field of learning that has been the domain of the colleges. The CAMPE response has been to acknowledge that while CARS' actions could affect the revenues of the colleges, it could make learning more accessible to the industry.

Lesson 5: Involve the Right People

In establishing a joint initiative, **efforts should be made to include senior representatives that have a full understanding of their organizations and can commit their organizations** – following proper consultation - **to new plans, strategies or directions that the organization may be decided upon.** Including lower level staff that are not able to commit their organization to a new course of action will cause delay and frustration.

The membership of both CAMPE and CARS includes department heads, directors and deputy directors. In short, people with clout. Decisions made between the two organizations do not have be reviewed as extensively.

While senior level representation may impose additional duties upon already overworked executives, it ultimately saves time and money

Lesson 6: Establish a Secretariat

Groups that wish to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of their work are advised, when feasible, to establish a secretariat to handle the administrative and research needs of their organization.

The CAMPE executive is made up of department heads and senior college administrators whose time is limited. Any time spent in meetings or doing work for CAMPE takes away from the time that is available to handle the responsibilities and obligations of their paying, fulltime jobs. For most, this means additional strain and responsibility. As a result, most members of the executive have discovered that it is virtually impossible to do their paying work, and follow-through on the needs of CAMPE. As a result, CAMPE began to suffer.

In late 2000, a part-time executive director was hired by CAMPE to coordinate its activities and operations. This enabled CAMPE's work to be handled as needed. This has had a tremendous effect on the CAMPE's efficiency and effectiveness and efforts are underway to:

- Maintain momentum between meetings;
- Improve CAMPE's credibility, visibility and distinctiveness from CARS;
- Transfer much of the workload of the executive to the executive director; and
- Sustain the continued commitment of CAMPE members.

5.0 Future Prospects

Past successes will drive future collaboration between CAMPE and CARS.

Both CAMPE and CARS are independent organizations that have overlapping interests in the automotive repair and service industry. Their ability to serve their constituencies effectively depends upon them continuing to collaborate to improve the integrity of the automotive repair sector. Overall, the collaboration has been effective and very productive. The results attained have been invaluable to the industry, the colleges, and the people working in the automotive repair and service sector.

The lessons that have been learned through this collaboration are intended to benefit other organizations that are considering establishing a similar strategic alliance or affinity group.

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